

DORMITORIES, FRATERNITIES, SORORITIES AND BARRACKS

Overview of the fire problem in dormitories, fraternities, sororities and barracks, including trend tables, causes, time of day, day of week, month of year and area of origin. Also includes published incident descriptions, published articles and investigation reports and summaries.

Executive Summary

During the five-year period from 2005-2009 U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 3,840 structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks. These fires caused an annual average of 3 civilian deaths, 38 civilian fire injuries, and \$20.9 million in direct property damage. Fires in these properties accounted for 0.7% of all reported structure fires within the same time period.

The number of reported fires in the dormitory occupancy group increased 17% from 3,200 in 1980 to 3,740 in 2009. Fires fell in the range of 2,300 to 2,700 from 1982 through 1995, and then declined further in 1996 to 1998. Estimates rapidly increased after 1998, until becoming somewhat more stable in recent years. The increase in recent years is likely affected by the change to NFIRS 5.0, which allows for easier reporting of certain kinds of fires, notably confined cooking fires, which are quite common in this occupancy type (78% of all fires).

September and October were the peak months for fires in dormitory properties. The fewest occurred in June, July, and August.

Saturday and Sunday were the peak days, with 32% of fires taking place during these two days. The peak time of day was between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. These fires were less common between 3 a.m. and 10 a.m.

During 2005-2009, when automatic suppression equipment was present in structure fires in these properties and the type of equipment was known, 94% were sprinklers. When wet pipe sprinklers were present in these properties, the civilian death rate per 1,000 fires was 72% lower, and property damage was 71% lower than when no automatic extinguishing equipment was present.

Two-thirds (65%) of fires in these properties began in the kitchen or cooking area. Nine percent of fires started in the bedroom, but these fires were responsible for 22% of injuries. Three percent of fires began in a lavatory, bathroom, or locker room, 3% began in a hallway or corridor, and 3% began in a common area.

Those interested in learning more and staying safe in dormitories and fraternities and sororities can visit:

**Leading Cause of Fires, Civilian Injuries, and Direct Property Damage in Structure Fires Involving
Dormitories, Fraternities, Sororities, and Barracks
2005-2009 Annual Averages**

